



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development
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NATIVE AMERICAN RETAIL AND LEARNING CENTER TO BE BUILT WITH HELP OF USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT DOLLARS

Lincoln, Neb., June 2, 2005—The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development awarded a rural business enterprise grant of \$350,000 to Ho-Chunk Community Development Corporation (HCCDC). Funds will construct a multi-use Native American Retail and Learning Center on the Winnebago Tribe reservation that is anticipated to create 43 new entrepreneurial jobs. Remaining funds for this \$1.5 million plus project are derived from an U.S. Housing and Urban Development Indian Community Development Block Grant, U.S. Health and Human Services Community Service Block Grant, and HCCDC.

“In recent years Winnebago has been working to improve its economic conditions through increasing opportunities to create new businesses, constructing commercial facilities, and creating jobs. These USDA funds will allow us to construct a building that will encourage entrepreneurship through culturally relevant activities,” stated Judi Meyer-Ogden, executive director for HCCDC.

The Center will feature upper level studio space to provide work area for artists, allowing tourists the opportunity to view the artists at work and observe Native craft techniques. Lower level area will be designed for retail space to display and sell handmade Native arts and craft products. Additionally, the lower level will house classroom area for teaching artisan, crafts, business, and other classes.

“USDA Rural Development is pleased to assist Ho-Chunk Community Development Corporation with their business development venture,” stated Deborah Drbal, business and cooperative specialist for USDA Rural Development. “The Center will attract tourists, market Native American products and create jobs, providing significant outcomes to their business economy.”

The Ho-Chunk Village project is one of the most innovative and large-scale socioeconomic development projects ever attempted in Indian Country. Phase II entails construction of approximately 50 percent of a 150,000 sq. ft. business park estimated at over \$6 million. The Center will be located in the business park along with a new business incubator/commercial property comprised of a main floor mini-mall which USDA Rural Development provided \$200,000 towards. The mall will house four new small entrepreneurial commercial businesses anticipated to initially create nine jobs and save one. USDA Rural Development recently provided HCCDC with \$200,000 to provide low-interest gap financing loans to public and non-profit organizations for business and community development. Seven projects creating approximately 17 new jobs are anticipated to be funded.

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